

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

June 18, 2001
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Mosher¹, Deputy Mayor Marshall, Councilmembers Creighton, Davidson, Degginger, Lee, and Noble

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Marshall opened the meeting at 6:07 p.m. There was no executive session.

2. Study Session

(a) Status Report and Discussion of Council's Neighborhood Priority

City Manager Steve Sarkozy recalled Council's discussions during the 2001 budget process and at the February Council Retreat regarding energizing the City's focus on neighborhoods. Planning and Community Development Director Matt Terry introduced the following staff to present the Coordinated Neighborhood Investment Strategy: Transportation Director Goran Sparrman, Public Information Officer Ron Langley, and Neighborhood Outreach Manager Cheryl Kuhn.

Mr. Terry said Council identified three components to be included in the City's neighborhood strategy: 1) enhanced communications plan, 2) targeted service delivery, and 3) neighborhood investment. The overall purpose is to address emerging neighborhood issues, improve livability and neighborhood character, foster new leadership, and enhance service delivery.

Mr. Terry said this initiative represents an extension of the City's longtime focus on neighborhoods. In the 1980s, the City actively engaged the community in the development of subarea land use plans. In the late 1980s, the Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP), as well as block watch and traffic calming programs, were established. In the early 1990s, the City expanded its neighborhood outreach efforts, established a mini City Hall at Crossroads Shopping Center, and initiated a mediation program. In recent years, the City introduced a neighborhood

¹ Mayor Mosher arrived at 6:18 p.m.

liaison program, neighborhood networks, and a local government orientation class known as *Bellevue Basics*.

Ms. Kuhn said she and Mr. Langley have developed a communications plan to: 1) better reflect the City Council's emphasis on high-quality neighborhoods, 2) deliver information about neighborhood services in a clear, relevant, and easily usable form, and 3) use emerging technology to better advantage. A series of focus groups involving City staff and residents were conducted to identify opportunities for improving communications. Overall, focus group participants are happy with Bellevue, particularly its parks and open spaces, and feel the local government is responsive to their needs. Participants reported using the following forms of communication: *It's Your City* newspaper, neighborhood liaisons, mini City Hall, and mailings. They reported a preference for short, relevant messages, a better web site, timely information via the Internet and BTV, continued excellent customer service, information about both their neighborhood and the city as a whole, and improved communications for citizens speaking English as a second language.

Mr. Langley explained three major initiatives of the communications plan proposal. The first is to redesign the City's web site by November. The new web site will be organized according to services and topics that will make more sense to citizens, rather than the current organization of information by department, and will include a dedicated neighborhood section. The second initiative is to develop zonal editions of *It's Your City* targeted for three major areas of the city. In addition to the regular newspaper, area-specific supplements would be published twice a year for each of the three areas. The third project is to establish an email list server, a subscriber-based service that allows citizens to receive specific types of information via email.

Mr. Terry described a pilot project in East Bellevue focusing on targeted service delivery, the second major element of the overall plan. A survey of 380 households was conducted and results are now being compiled. Based on some public input indicating a preference for proactive code enforcement, the purpose of this effort is to determine whether there is consensus on this issue among East Bellevue residents.

Moving to the third element regarding a neighborhood investment strategy, Mr. Terry said one objective is to do a better job of coordinating projects sponsored by various City departments within a given neighborhood. In addition, staff would like to strengthen the City's relationship with residents by involving them in discussions about what is right about their neighborhoods and what they would like to improve. This will help the City improve its response to items such as aging infrastructure and traffic problems and hopefully stimulate private investment in older areas of the city. Mr. Terry suggested that Council identify a pilot area to test this approach. Neighborhood representatives would then be selected to work with City staff to assess community needs and work toward developing solutions and improvements. This effort is expected to produce two branches of response: 1) items that can be readily addressed such as code enforcement and service delivery issues, and 2) items that will require longer term investments to be incorporated into the budget over time by Council. Mr. Terry said it is anticipated these initiatives can be accomplished with existing staff by shifting the internal work program.

Mr. Sparrman recalled that staff worked with Council and the community last year to develop and adopt a Local Transportation Vision. Objectives contained in the vision are as follows:

1. Manage congestion through regional projects on I-90, SR 520, and I-405. Focus new development in Downtown Bellevue and the city's mixed-use centers.
2. Protect neighborhoods by reducing cut-through traffic on local streets, reducing traffic speeds, and implementing safety enhancements.
3. Provide travel choices through improved transit service, expanded park and ride lot capacity, expansion of Bellevue Transportation Center, and efforts to make options such as vanpooling/carpooling, riding the bus, and working at home more viable. Additional activities include expanding the network of sidewalks and bikeways and evaluating the feasibility of a downtown circulator service.
4. Integrate transportation projects with all street elements such as street lighting, trees, noise/visual protection, pedestrian facilities, aesthetic elements, and utilities.

Mr. Terry summarized that this proposal represents a more coordinated, flexible, and tailored service delivery approach. If Council approves of the proposed strategy, the next steps will be: 1) implementation of the communications plan, 2) completion of the code enforcement pilot project, and 3) Council's selection of an area for the Neighborhood Investment pilot program to be launched in September. Mayor Mosher opened the floor for Council discussion.

Mr. Lee expressed support for the proposal. In terms of selecting an area for the Neighborhood Investment pilot program, Mr. Lee suggested that staff develop a recommendation for Council's consideration.

Mr. Noble is in favor of the approach and eager to involve the community in identifying and planning projects.

Mr. Degginger is pleased with the proposed holistic approach to neighborhood services and transportation projects. He is interested in the improved coordination of transportation and utility projects.

Mrs. Marshall commended staff for listening to Council's priorities. She is pleased with the City's many neighborhood programs and services and looks forward to further enhancements. She suggested inviting recent Board and Commission applicants to become involved in the neighborhood projects.

Mr. Creighton expressed support for the proposal. He is interested in maintaining balance and equity between neighborhoods in terms of projects to be implemented. In response to Mr. Creighton, Mr. Terry said the idea for the Neighborhood Investment pilot program is to select an area roughly equivalent to one of the City's 12-15 neighborhood subareas. If Council wishes to continue the program, Mr. Terry estimated that two such projects could be completed each year over the next few years.

Dr. Davidson is pleased with the evolution of City policies and programs focusing on neighborhood issues. He sees the proposed strategy as a continuation and expansion of the

Neighborhood Enhancement Program and related projects. Dr. Davidson discussed the importance of providing enhanced public transit service to local neighborhoods.

Mayor Mosher is pleased with the proposed strategy to offer a package of neighborhood services based on each subarea's needs. He noted overall Council consensus to move forward with the proposed approach and activities.

(b) Parks and Open Space Capital Funding Discussion

Mr. Sarkozy opened the discussion and noted Council's commitment to maintaining Bellevue's vision of a City in a Park. Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran introduced Damon Diessner, Utilities Assistant Director, and commented on the coordination between the two departments for various open space projects.

Mr. Foran explained that the purpose of this agenda item is to discuss future opportunities and needs for open space preservation, environmental stewardship, and parks development. He requested Council direction for staff to engage the community on these issues and return to Council in the fall with their findings and recommendations for consideration. Mr. Foran said the ongoing vision for a City in a Park has two overall objectives: 1) create an open space system of impressive natural habitats that complement the urban landscape, and 2) provide access to a variety of parks and recreation experiences for all residents.

Mr. Foran said Bellevue's current parks and open space system was built through a series of voter initiatives beginning in 1956. He highlighted a 1981 stormwater bond issue that created flood control facilities with multiple benefits including public access, water quality enhancement, and stormwater retention. Mr. Foran discussed the overall goal of preserving and enhancing Bellevue's quality of life. He said greenways connect the City's open spaces and parks and provide multiple benefits such as natural buffer areas in and between neighborhoods, the preservation of wildlife habitat, trail connections, improved water quality, and the preservation of views along trails and roadways.

Mr. Foran displayed maps showing Bellevue's tree cover in 1972, 1986, and 1996 and cautioned that much of the remaining green areas are not under public ownership. He described the City's commitment to environmental stewardship exemplified in the open stream concept pioneered by the Utilities Department, the establishment of Native Growth Protection Areas, and the Forest Management Program. The collaboration between the Parks and Utilities Departments enables the City to focus on both fish and human habitats. Mr. Foran displayed a map of Bellevue's greenways and noted opportunities for additional trail and greenway connections.

Turning to parks and recreation opportunities, Mr. Foran said it is important to keep pace with local and regional growth, fulfill the promise of past visionary actions, invest in neighborhoods, and maintain a focus on youth and families. Mr. Foran said staff will be conducting the following activities between now and the fall:

- Engage Parks and Community Services Board and Environmental Services Commission in policy discussions.

- Complete public outreach process for Parks and Open Space Plan update.
- Consider the results of the Downtown Implementation Plan.
- Identify highest priorities.
- Return to Council to develop implementation options and fiscal parameters.

Dr. Davidson expressed support for staff's presentation. He is pleased the City has been able to avoid raising property taxes for the past six years. When property taxes are needed, he prefers that they are used to support schools and parks, subject to voter approval.

Mr. Degginger feels it is particularly important to preserve parks and open space as the area continues to experience growth.

Mrs. Marshall advocated the acquisition and preservation of land within the community as population densities continue to increase. She encouraged the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas such as the McTavish property.

Mr. Lee commented on the need to balance the community's interests and priorities in terms of parks and open spaces. He said some residents feel the City has spent enough resources on preserving passive open spaces. He is interested in creating more active recreation opportunities as a means of investing in human infrastructure. He encouraged the efficient use of government resources and the establishment of partnerships to achieve desired objectives. Mr. Lee endorses the notion of a bond issue because in the end the voters will make the decision.

Mr. Noble noted Council's desire to continue Bellevue's long-standing commitment to parks. He endorsed the creation of partnerships and the involvement of Board and Commission members in this effort.

Mr. Creighton looks forward to further development of the City's more recent park acquisitions for both active and passive uses. He is in favor of the continued practice of presenting bond issues to the voters but cautioned that competing needs such as transportation are likely to be presented to voters in the near future as well.

Mayor Mosher noted Council support for staff's proposed activities.

Mr. Sarkozy thanked Councilmembers for their support. He said the acquisition of significant land for additional parks and open spaces is beyond the capability of the City's budget. Realistically, a bond issue will be necessary to provide this level of funding.

At 7:44 p.m., Mayor Mosher declared recess to the reception for outgoing Board and Commission members, to be followed by the regular session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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